



USS PICKET



Battle of Washington



During the summer of 1862, Union forces firmly controlled eastern North Carolina, with garrisons stationed at Plymouth, Washington, New Bern and elsewhere. Federal detachments raided the countryside at will, while Confederate authorities struck back with raids of their own. One such action occurred here at Washington on September 6, when Confederate Maj. Stephen D.

Pool led 1,000 infantry, cavalry, and artillery against the 1,200-man garrison. Concealed by early morning fog, Pool and his men slipped past Federal pickets and into town. Once the shooting started, sleepy Union soldiers stumbled into the streets and began a confused, uncoordinated defense. Eventually the haze lifted enough for two Federal gunboats, *Picket* and *Louisiana*, to shell the



Washington, N.C., "showing the rebel batteries, and the national defenses during the siege of April, 1863." Solon M. Allis, 21st Mass. Inf.

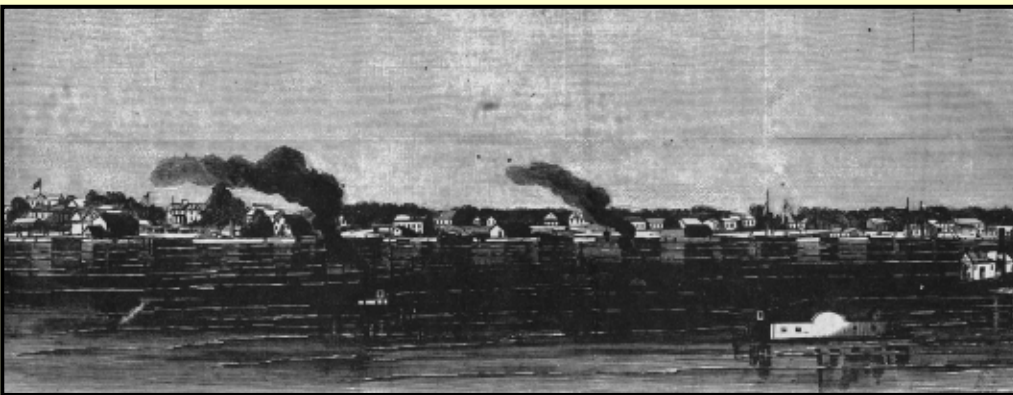
Confederates. Suddenly, *Picket's* magazine exploded, killing Capt. Sylvester Nicoll and 19 crewmen and wounding six others.

The Confederates cheered, "Washington is ours!" Soon, however, Federal reinforcements arrived to turn the tide. Col. Edward E. Potter, 1st Regiment North Carolina Union Volunteers, was leading five cavalry companies and an artillery battery from Washington to Plymouth when he heard the sound of gunfire. He



USS *Picket*, shown at right in this image, rests on the bottom of the Tar River nearby. The 175-foot-long, 29-foot-wide gunboat was armed with one 30-pounder Parrott and three 12-pounder rifled Wiard's howitzers. In 1862, *Picket* participated in the battles of Roanoke Island (February 7-8), New Bern (March 13-14), and Fort Macon (April 25-26), as well as Washington. – Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library

turned his detachment around and, after more than two hours of hard fighting, drove the Confederates from Washington. Confederate casualties were 31 killed, 30 wounded, and 24 taken prisoner, while the Federals lost 26 killed, 55 wounded, and 12 captured.



Beaufort County, Washington, N.C. "Washington, on the Tar River, North Carolina." Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 16, 1863.